IF FREUD HAD BEEN A NEUROTIC COLORED WOMAN: READING DR. FRANCES CRESS WELSING

Any force which estranges and alienates us from one another serves the interests of racist domination.

—BELL HOOKS

That there is homophobia among Black people in America is largely reflective of the homophobic culture in which we live. . . . Yet, we cannot rationalize the disease of homophobia among Black people as the white man's fault, for to do so is to absolve ourselves of our responsibility to transform ourselves.

—CHERYL CLARKE

IN 1974, THE YEAR THAT DR. FRANCES CRESS WELSING WROTE "THE Politics Behind Black Male Passivity, Effeminization, Bisexuality, and Homosexuality," I entered my final year of senior high school.

By that time, I had arrived at a very clear understanding of how dangerous it was to be a homosexual in my Black neighborhood and in society. I had no particular inclinations to slip on a dress like skin, wear loud lipstick, and wiggle my hips through the four A.M. shadows and street lights of the tenderloin or the boulevards where erotic desire was claimed by the highest bidder or the loneliest man. Facing this then-limited perception of homosexual life, I could only wonder, where did I fit in? I had no particular inclination to chase down men while wearing platform pumps and a miniskirt. None of this behavior was the least bit appealing to me.

Conversely, I was perfecting my heterosexual disguise; I was practicing the necessary use of masks for survival; I was

calculating the distance between the first day of class and graduation, the distance between graduation from high school and departure for college—and ultimately, the arrival of my freedom from home, community, and my immediate peers. I believed my imminent independence would allow me to explore what my hetero-disguise and my masks allowed me to conceal.

It is fortunate that the essay by Dr. Welsing I am citing here had not come to my attention during my adolescence. I can only imagine how little resistance the assault of her ideas would have been met with by me at that time. At seventeen, I wasn't coming out of anything I couldn't get back into immediately, and that included closets. But in 1974, the concept of "closets" had not come to my attention. I knew not to reveal my homosexual desires to my peers or discuss them with my family or any school counselor.

During the course of the next sixteen years I would articulate and politicize my sexuality. I would discover that homo sex did not constitute a whole life nor did it negate my racial identity or constitute a substantive reason to be estranged from my family and Black culture. I discovered, too, that the work ahead for me included, most importantly, being able to integrate all of my identities into a functioning self, instead of accepting a dysfunctional existence as the consequence of my homosexual desires.

Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, a controversial Washington, D.C.-based general and child psychiatrist, emerged on the Black cultural scene in the early 1970s. Her claim to fame is her controversial essay "The Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy): A Psychogenetic Theory and World Outlook" (1970). This widely disseminated essay appears with her article "Black Male Passivity" in her recently released book, *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1990). She is a sought-after public speaker, and in recent years, her ideas